

REMARKS

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

This Amendment is submitted in response to the March 15, 2005 Office Action issued in connection with the above-captioned application. By this Amendment, all pending claims (1-43 and 45-54) have been cancelled and new claims 55-70 have been added. (Note that there is no claim 44). Claims 55 and 63 are the sole independent claims. No new matter has been added. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner review and consider the patentability of the new claims in view of the remarks set forth below.

Initially, the undersigned wishes to acknowledge and thank the Examiner for the in-person interview between the Examiner and the undersigned on May 25, 2005. During the interview the undersigned presented the Examiner with a proposed new claim 55 which was then discussed in view of the references relied upon in rejecting the now-cancelled claims. At the conclusion of the interview, the Examiner agreed that new claim 55 overcomes the existing references for the reasons set forth below. However, the Examiner indicated that an additional search may be conducted.

Claim 55 is directed to a system for viewing content over the Internet. In general, the system allows a user to acquire a character icon for display on a user device, such as a computer, and to browse the Internet to acquire character enhancements which are appropriate for the user's character icon. This is accomplished by providing communication between a user device and a service provider. The user device includes a processor having a browser program, and a graphical user interface (GUI) application containing proprietary communication protocol and which provides

a GUI for depicting a character icon on the user device. (See, p. 16, lines 1-40 of the specification). The processor also provides a unique identifier for identifying the user of the user device. The service provider maintains a user record which corresponds to the user. The user record contains an identification of the user's character icon, user preferences, and one or more previously enabled character enhancements for the user's character. The service provider communicates with the GUI application on the user device via the proprietary communication protocol for authorizing the depiction of the character icon and one or more previously-enabled character enhancements. A target website is provided which is accessible directly by the user device via the Internet. The target website provides a new character enhancement for the user's character icon. The new character enhancement is capable of being enabled in the user's record at the service provider without requiring user interaction with the service provider. Thus, the target website communicates directly with the service provider to enable the new character enhancement for the user's character icon. (See, p. 20, lines 15-21 of the specification) This is accomplished by the target website using the user's unique identifier -- which the target website obtained from the user's communication with the target website -- to access the user's record at the service provider. (See, p. 17, lines 9-16 of the specification)

New independent method claim 63 is directed to a method of viewing content over the Internet. This claim is similar to system claim 55 in that it also provides for communication between (1) a GUI application and a service provider, (2) the user device and a target website, and (3) the target website and the service provider. A unique identifier of the user is used by the target website to access the user record at the service provider in order to enable, in the user's record, a character enhancement which is appropriate for the user's character icon.

Turning now to the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected the now-canceled claims as rendered obvious from the combination of U.S. Patent No. 5,710,887 (Chelliah et al.), Smith/Cowan "Frequently Asked Questions: Basic Information About MUDs And MUDDing" (hereinafter "Smith/Cowan"), and U.S. Patent No. 6,476,830 (Farmer et al.). Chelliah et al. discloses an "electronic mall" wherein suppliers of goods and services interact with consumers via the Internet through a choice of virtual "storefronts" (See FIG. 1 and col. 6, lines 26-30). The storefronts are interfaced with individual supplier websites through an "interface to electronic storefront" 26 shown in FIG. 1. Thus, Chelliah et al. discloses a centralized system wherein there is no direct access between the consumer device (e.g., a PC, etc.) and the individual suppliers of goods. Rather, all access must go through the electronic mall. In contrast, the invention as now claimed provides for a user to access a service provider, the user to access a target website using a browser program, and also provides for the target website to use a unique identifier of the user to access a user's record stored by a service provider. This "multiple communication path" feature is simply not present in Chelliah et al.

As for the Smith/Cowan reference, this teaches various features of a Multiple User Dimension (MUD) system. Such systems utilize a centralized database wherein multiple users, each controlling a character or avatar, interact with each other through a service provider site operating a "server". As stated in section 2.6 on p. 11 of Smith/Cowan, "the server keeps track of the database, the current players, the rules and sometimes the time." Thus, the server must always be connected to the participating users of the MUD.

Farmer et al. discloses a computer system wherein an avatar can be controlled and can interact in a "virtual world". As shown in FIG. 2 and described in col. 9, lines 30-51, a plurality of

on-line users interact directly with a service provider 270. Thus, here too a centralized system is disclosed.

In contrast to either Smith/Cowan or Farmer et al. and as already discussed above, the now-claimed invention provides for a user to access a service provider with a user device, provides for the user to visit a target website using a browser program on the user device, and also provides for the target website to access a user's record on a service provider using a unique identifier of the user. Such a feature is neither taught nor suggested by any of the aforementioned references, whether considered alone or in combination with each other. Accordingly, it is believed that independent claims 55 and 63 along with their respective dependent claims are now in condition for allowance.

In the event the Examiner requires further clarification or comment on the arguments presented hereinabove, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned to discuss same prior to the issuance of a further Office Action.

Respectfully submitted,

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